

Name _____

Date _____

Daoism - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. In 1046 BCE, the Zhou Dynasty rose to power, ruling over China for the next 800 years. However, the Zhou didn't have a centralized government. Instead, China functioned as a collection of separately governed provinces, whose feudal rulers professed allegiance to the Zhou emperor. Over time, these smaller kingdoms amassed more and more power, coming into conflict with each other and with the Zhou dynasty. The period between 475 and 221 BCE was so full of violence that it is now known as the Warring States Period. Leaders during this era looked to philosophy for guidance about how to establish and maintain a healthy social order. This prompted an explosion of new and interesting ideas, now known as the Hundred Schools of Thought. Daoism and Confucianism, both of which continue to influence Chinese life today, emerged during this volatile time.

Which best characterizes China during the years 475 to 221 BCE?

A. Harmony and innovation

B. Conflict and stagnancy



C. Conflict and innovation

D. Harmony and stagnancy

The text states, "The period between 475 and 221 BCE was...full of violence" and "Leaders during this era looked to philosophy....This prompted an explosion of new and interesting ideas."

2. The *Tao Te Ching*, or *The Way and Its Virtue*, likely written in the 3rd or 4th century BCE, is the earliest foundational text of Daoism. Its purported author is Laozi, who some suggest was a records-keeper or curator in the court of the Zhou dynasty. According to one story, Laozi wrote the text right before exiling himself from China. However, there's no evidence that this is anything more than legend. In fact, Laozi may not have existed at all—and even if he did, he may not have been the *Tao Te Ching's* author. But if Laozi didn't write the text, who did? No one knows for sure, but one theory is that it's a compilation by several different authors, who put into writing ideas that had originated centuries earlier. The *Tao Te Ching* consists of 81 pithy, poetic verses instructing readers on how to live simply and in balance with nature. Despite their brevity, the verses can inspire deep reflection. Two examples are: "To attain knowledge, add things every day. To attain wisdom, remove things every day," and "The sage produces but does not own, acts but does not claim."

What is the main idea of this passage?



- A. The *Tao Te Ching* is a text of undetermined authorship that lays out the principles of Daoism.
- This main idea is supported by details like "The *Tao Te Ching*...is the earliest foundational text of Daoism," and "The *Tao Te Ching* consists of 81 pithy, poetic verses instructing readers on how to live simply and in balance with nature."*
- B. Laozi may have composed the *Tao Te Ching* immediately before putting himself in voluntary exile.
- C. In order to become wise, one should renounce pride, possessions, and worldliness.
- D. It is likely that the *Tao Te Ching* was authored by numerous people.

3. According to Daoism, the key to a healthy society is for people to live in accord with Dao, or the “way.” The Dao is a natural force that guides everything in the cosmos. Living in accord with this natural force means not disrupting it or pushing against it. By letting things take their natural course, conflict, corruption, and oppression can be prevented. In other words, the best kind of action is non-action. When it comes to government, this principle of non-action (*wu wei*) means having very few regulations. So while a Daoist government would not promote high taxes, it would also not promote tax breaks or other subsidies. As the *Tao Te Ching* states, “Stop trying to control. Let go of fixed plans and concepts, and the world will govern itself.”

According to Daoism, strict legal codes { }.

- A. are less important than government assistance
- B. help people live in harmony with nature



- C. interfere with self-governance

*The text states that the “principle of non-action (*wu wei*) means having very few regulations” and that “the *Tao Te Ching* states, ‘Stop trying to control. Let go of fixed plans and concepts, and the world will govern itself.’”*

- D. are key to a healthy social order

4. The concept of yin-yang is associated with many Chinese philosophies, Daoism included. Yin and yang represent opposing forces in nature. For example, yin is associated with darkness, passivity, and femaleness, while yang is associated with light, activity, and maleness. But although these forces are in opposition to each other, they’re also complementary; both are necessary for the universe to exist. Nor are they entirely separate; yin contains the seed of yang, and yang contains the seed of yin. Harmony results from a balance between the two. In Daoism, the Dao, or the force behind all of creation, is a perfect balance of yin and yang.

Which is NOT an example of yin and yang?

- A. Darkness and light



- B. Warmth and heat

The text states, “Yin and yang represent opposing forces in nature.” Warmth and heat are not opposing, so this is not an example of yin and yang.

- C. Stillness and movement

- D. Contraction and expansion